

Fire Prevention Inspection Fees FAQs

- **What is the Fire Prevention Inspection Fee?**

- The fee, collected as a result of City of Hampton Ordinance enactment 14-29 found under Chapter 14, Article II (Fire Prevention and Protection), was established to facilitate community risk reduction measures with the City of Hampton in order to improve the safety and health of our citizens and customers.

- **What is the ordinance that establishes the Fire Prevention Inspection Fee?**

- (a) *There is hereby established an annual fire code inspection fee which shall be paid to the city pursuant to the Statewide Fire Prevention Code. The fee shall be charged to the owner for each premises that is subject to maintenance inspection under the Statewide Fire Prevention Code based upon the following schedule:*

Building Space (sq. ft.)	Annual Fee
0-999	\$ 25.00
1,000-5,000	\$ 75.00
5,001-10,000	\$100.00
10,001-20,000	\$125.00
20,001-50,000	\$225.00
50,001-100,000	\$275.00
100,001-200,000	\$325.00
>200,000	\$375.00

- (1) *The fee hereby established shall not be charged to the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Virginia, its political subdivisions, or the City of Hampton.*
- (2) *The fee established by this provision shall be due and payable from the date that a statement of account reflecting the charge is mailed by the city. The charges established by this provision shall be maintained in an open account in the name of the person or persons responsible for payment of this fee. Any account which is more than thirty (30) days delinquent may be forwarded to the city attorney or designee for collection. In the event that the account is forwarded for collection, the person in whose name the account is maintained shall be liable to the city for, in addition to the fire code inspection fee, a collection fee in the amount of thirty-five dollars (\$35.00), or twenty-five percent (25%) of the outstanding balance on the account, whichever is greater, said collection fee representing administrative costs and attorney's fees to the city for collecting said debt. Tender of payment and acceptance of the amount originally due the city under subsection (a) above shall not constitute satisfaction of the account unless and until the collection fee is paid.*

- **When was the Fire Prevention Inspection Fee established?**

- The fee was approved and placed into ordinance by Hampton City Council on May 9, 2012.

- **When did the Fire Prevention Inspection Fee go into effect?**

- The fee went into effect on July 1, 2012 to allow for collection for fiscal year 2013 (July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013).

- **Who is responsible for paying the fee?**
 - o The fee is charged to all individuals, entities, or companies that own commercial property within the City of Hampton.
- **If I own a business in the City of Hampton but do not own the property, will I be charged the fee?**
 - o No. Only property owners will be charged the fee.
- **When I pay the fee, what period of time will the fee be covering?**
 - o The fees are applied to the city's fiscal years. The fiscal year begins on July 1st and ends on June 30th each year (twelve (12) months).
- **When will the Fire Prevention Inspection Fee invoice be sent out?**
 - o The FY'13 fee will be mailed out during the month of February 2013 to collect for services rendered between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013. However, mailing dates of invoices for future fiscal years is being developed to ensure we provide the best service for our customers.
- **Once I receive the invoice, how long will have I have to submit payment?**
 - o The property owner will have approximately 45 days to submit payment depending on when the statement reaches the owner.
- **What happens if I recently purchased the property when I receive the invoice? Will the fee be prorated?**
 - o The City of Hampton follows best practices in the industry. The owner of the property at the time of invoice is responsible for the entire fee since the fee is applied to a 12-month time period and not term of ownership.
- **What happens if I receive the invoice but sold the property prior to receiving the invoice?**
 - o The city would verify the property sale and work with you to ensure the new or current owner of the property at the time of invoicing would be billed appropriately.
- **I paid the Fire Prevention Inspection Fee but the property was never inspected during the 12-month invoice period. Why is that?**
 - o The purpose of the fee is to facilitate several measures in the Fire Division's community risk reduction program to create a safer, healthier community throughout the City of Hampton. The inspection process is only one of these important measures. All high risk, target hazards such as our schools, department stores, industrial facilities, and the like are addressed first as they pose the greatest potential risk to our community and citizens.

Although the Hampton Division of Fire & Rescue attempts to inspect all commercial properties each year, this is not always possible as several risk reduction measures are occurring simultaneously. Program efforts are taking place daily that directly and indirectly enhance the safety of the owner's property. Should the owner have a specific safety concern regarding his or her property, they are encouraged to contact the Fire Prevention Section so that they may address their concerns in an expeditious manner.

- **I own several properties. How will I be billed for these properties?**
 - The City of Hampton assigns a Log Record Sequence Number (LRSN) to each property considered an individual parcel. If an individual owns several parcels (not within the same physical structure) with different LRSNs, each property is invoiced according the approved fee schedule.
- **I own a large building or line of connected parcels such as a strip mall. How will I be billed?**
 - If the owner's building or line of connected parcels is assigned only one number by the City Assessor's Office, the owner will only be billed one fee. However, if there are multiple LRSNs assigned, a fee is charged to each LRSN, unless the parcels exist within one identifiable structure. If the parcels are within one identifiable structure and there is one owner, the owner will be billed one fee for the total amount of square footage of the building. If more than one owner owns separate parcels in one building, each owner will be billed one fee for the combined total square footage of each parcel owned not to exceed the total square footage of the building.
- **If I own several properties, will I receive one invoice with a cumulative amount or will I receive individual bills?**
 - Some individual or entities own several properties. Based on the billing system in place, owners may receive one invoice with multiple properties and fees included and some may receive an invoice for each property owned. The owner is responsible for submitting payment for each property owned based on the fee schedule of each.
- **Where do I mail the payment?**
 - All payments should be mailed to:

City of Hampton
Finance Department
c/o Account # 01-56060.001
22 Lincoln Street
Hampton, VA 23669

The owner should include the account number listed in the mailing address on their check or payment to help ensure the monies are correctly directed to the city's fire prevention efforts.

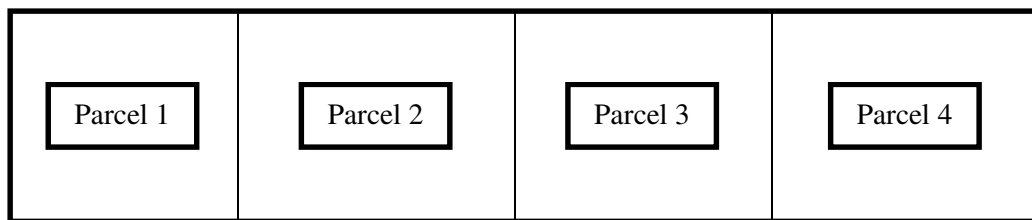
- **What happens if I'm late in submitting my payment for the fee?**
 - Provisions in the ordinance clearly state that, "a penalty of \$35.00 or 25% of the outstanding balance, whichever is greater, will be assessed if payment is not received or postmarked by midnight" on the date due indicated on the invoice.
- **What happens if I do not pay the fee?**
 - If the fee is not paid by the indicated due date, a penalty is assessed. Should payment not be received in a timely manner thereafter, the delinquent account will be sent to the City Treasurer's Office or designee to begin Warrant in Debt proceedings or similar through the General District Court. Under the Code of Virginia, typical outcomes of Warrant in Debt proceedings, if found culpable, are

a judgment against the property owner, property lien, garnishment, and a negative effect on credit score.

- **Can I pass this fee onto my tenant or business owner?**
 - Some owners may choose to pass this fee onto their tenant through various means. This is the owner's prerogative. However, the owner is still responsible for submitting payment.
- **May I pay more than one year of fees at one time?**
 - Currently there are no provisions in place to pay more than one year at a time. This also prevents issues that may arise should the property be sold during that time.
- **Why was a blank W-9 form sent along with my invoice?**
 - Since the Finance Office did not have some of the information they typically get from vendors and customers, sending the W-9 offered a way to collect this information for billing purposes. This information is also helpful should the bill need to be sent to collections. However, if the owner is uncomfortable with supplying this information, they may choose not to do so.
- **What if there is a discrepancy on my invoice such as an incorrectly stated square footage or fee according to the fee schedule?**
 - If an owner believes there is a billing error, they should contact the Fire Prevention Office at (757)727-1210. The staff will work to address any validated errors.

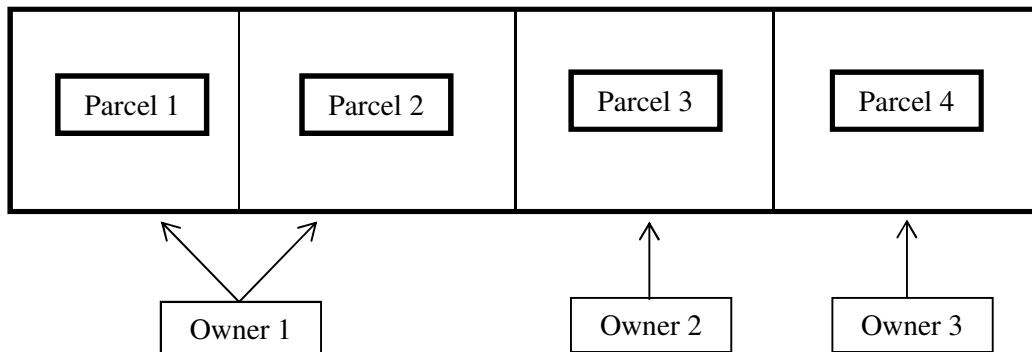
Visual examples to explain how fees are determined

EX.1



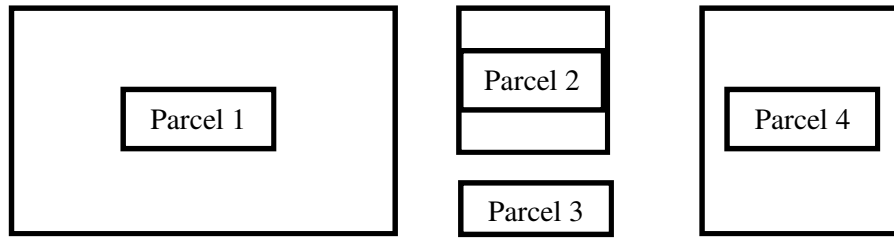
If one owner owns all four parcels in the building, they would receive one bill for the total square footage of the building.

EX. 2



If more than one owner owns a parcel or parcels in one physical, connected structure, then each owner would receive one bill for the total square footage associated with the parcels they own. In the example, Owner 1 would receive one bill for the combined square footage of parcels 1 and 2. Owners 2 and 3 would each receive one bill for the square footage of each parcel they own.

EX. 3



If one owner owns separate physical buildings listed as individual parcels and the parcels are not physically connected, the owner will receive separate invoices. In the example, the owner would receive four separate invoices.